1415 Grand Ave. Apt 1
San Diego, California
April 1, 1971

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

As a veteran of the Vietnam war, I was particularly distressed to learn of the guilty verdict and life sentence in the court martial of Lt. William L. Calley Jr. Clearly, Lt Calley is being made a scapegoat so that the entire U. S. military can vindicate itself for the great atrocity of its very presence in Vietnam.

Certainly, Mr. President, you must know that war does strange things to a man, particularly a war in which the "enemy" is often unseen, when the "enemy" is most often the civilian that he is trying to "protect". There comes a time when he realizes that there is not one noncombatant in an entire village of "civilians" and the only thing that makes any sense is preservation of one's self and one's unit.

During my year in Vietnam I fought constantly for the humane treatment of prisoners and civilians. The abuse and unnecessary killing was commonplace. I could curl your hair with stories of old men thrown down wells followed closely by explosives, and women and children who were blindfolded and shot. I am not trying to justify what Lt. Calley might have done by virtue of the frequency of occurrence of similar acts. But I am trying to point out that there is no justice in holding Lt. Calley up as an example before the world---to suffer for the sins of us all.

The great crime of the century was not committed by Lt. Calley or his men, or any of the men in my unit which I mentioned earlier. No, Mr. President, the great crime of our time is being committed by a government which finds it necessary to force its young men into a situation where they must practice genocide in order to stay alive and which does so in the name of peace and freedom.

I only hope that you have the courage to intervene in this matter by issuing an executive order pardoning Lt. Calley or drastically reducing his sentence. Here is a chance to really be a President of the people. Isn't it time we stabted living up to American ideals instead of ignoring what doesn't fit the ideal? I must leave you with one other question to consider. In what way is Lt. Calley more guilty of murder than the man who pulls the lever to release the payload of a B-52 over populated areas?

Very respectfully yours,

Robert H. Jessop

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